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Heredity. By J. A. S. WATSON. London: T. C. & E. C. Jack, 1912. Pp. 94. \$0.20.

This is one of a series, "The People's Books," designed, like several other similar series, to convey to the general reader the essential findings in the various fields of modern science, philosophy, and history. It begins by explaining the mechanism of heredity and the difference between pangenesis and the germ-plasm theory and follows with chapters on variation and its causes, on the inheritance of acquired characters, pure-line inheritance, Mendelism, the statistical study of heredity, practical problems in plant and animal breeding, and eugenics.

The book is marvelously comprehensive, considering its brevity. It is very readable, though it will not in some places be fully comprehended by one not already fairly familiar with the field. Thus in chap. ii, in six small pages including four graphs, the author distinguishes continuous from discontinuous variation, explains the normal probability-curve, shows how to find the average deviation, the standard deviation, and the coefficient of variation. The volume throughout is similarly solid, showing rare judgment in the distribution of space and the selection of illustrations. On disputed points the author weighs evidence carefully and avoids dogmatism. He is inclined to think that De Vries's theory of variation by leaps, however small they may be, has wholly supplanted Darwin's theory of gradual evolution by many minute steps. He thinks it most reasonable to regard the affirmation that acquired characters are inherited as not proven; that is, on this point of great interest to social scientists and educators he holds that there is as yet no clear case of inheritance of any character "acquired during the lifetime of the individual," but some such case may possibly be brought to light. The book closes with a few suggested titles for a course of reading in heredity.

T. H. HANKINS

CLARK UNIVERSITY

Social Problems: Their Treatment, Past, Present, and Future. Questions of the Day and of the Fray. By KARL PEARSON. London: Dulan & Co., 1912. Pp. 40.

This lecture opens with an appeal for a recognition of the biological basis of our social problems, urges that on account of their complexity they can be studied properly only by mass statistics, illustrates the inadequacy of many conclusions from medico-social statistics by the use

of six cases, and concludes that the need in modern sociology is "the establishment of university laboratories adequately equipped biologically, medically, and statistically, whose sole business shall be sociological research."

It cannot be doubted that Pearson is correct in maintaining that "if we penetrate beneath the surface politics of the moment we find great social problems which are really biological in character." He illustrates dangers in the interference with conditions without considering the full biological consequences of the inference; points out that elimination of child labor reduces the economic cause of the fecundity and that the proposed enforced withdrawal of the mother from wage-earning during from six to nine months around the period of childbirth would again reduce birth-rate and not that of a feeble-minded class.

The specific errors he attacks are: (1) an error that a certain school clinic had produced any change in the rate of development of the children; (2) the assertion that in Switzerland imbeciles are more apt to be conceived during vintage than at other seasons; (3) the assertion that the toothbrush drill in school will diminish the proportion of carious teeth; (4) the conclusion that the greater size of children in two- or three-room apartments over one-room apartments is due to crowding; for the better class (and better nourished) occupy the larger apartments, also the larger (and hence more grown-up) families do so; and hence these are larger than the children of small apartments; (5) the conclusion of a causal connection between pauperism and phthisis, which show a high correlation, is weakened by showing that there is a high correlation between the increasing cancer death-rate and increasing expenditure for apples. This last is a dangerous line of argument, for it shows up the fundamental weakness of many biometric methods—they show a correlation but do not demonstrate a causal relation. Finally, Pearson attacks in similar fashion a certain inference as to cause and effect from the decline of disorder in a town dating from the establishment of a reformatory.

The general impression that is left by these critiques is the inadequacy of the statistical method pure and simple to give an interpretation of biological problems. Most of the conclusions Pearson attacks are statistical conclusions. The errors arose from reliance on the statistical method of reaching conclusions. Pearson himself has, at sundry times, drawn most unwarranted conclusions from too fond a reliance on the output of statistical methods. As Galton said twenty-four years ago, "It is always well to retain a clear geometric view of the facts when we are dealing with statistical problems, which abound with dangerous

pitfalls, easily overlooked by the unwary, while they are cantering gaily along upon their arithmetic." The great lesson that we can draw from this criticism of the conclusions based on one set of statistics by the use of another set of statistics is that to get at the truth in social matters we need about four-fifths analysis of the problem and one-fifth figuring.

CHARLES B. DAVENPORT

COLD SPRING HARBOR

Social Progress in Contemporary Europe. By FREDERIC AUSTIN OGG, PH.D., Assistant Professor of History in Simmons College. New York: Macmillan, 1912. Pp. vii+384.

In speaking of socialism (p. 341), Professor Ogg says that "few words in any language have ever been more grossly abused." This is probably true, but I think we may except, as one of the few, the word "progress" at least, and perhaps also the word "social." Every age has its foibles, and one of ours, and a most significant one, is to be always talking of progress without knowing with any certainty what we mean by it. We do not know what is progress, but we are bound to have more of it—as Mr. Chesterton says. And therefore we are reduced to the necessity of supposing that whatever gets itself established is a step in the right direction. Conflicting tendencies are reconciled by falling into chronological sequences; and since national unity is the last great phase of European history, the unification of Germany, for example, at whatever cost to public morality, is judged to be a great gain—a tremendous victory for "progress."

Professor Ogg does nothing to get us out of this vicious circle. He frankly assumes that all the main tendencies of the nineteenth century—nationality, democracy, industrialism, and humanitarian social reform—are evidences of the onward and upward march of humanity. The book is indeed pervaded by a certain air of condescension toward ancestors, a certain complacent satisfaction in whatever is modern and strictly up to date. However, there is no great harm in this attitude, while there may be some advantages in it. At least, it has enabled Professor Ogg to write a useful book—a book which enlightens us little about social progress in contemporary Europe, but one which does give us, well and compactly presented, much desirable information about the changes that have occurred in the organization and activities of European society since the eighteenth century.

The two chapters on the "Old Régime" and the "Revolution," with which the book opens, seem somewhat perfunctory, and they are perhaps